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VIET-NAM

INFORMATION NOTES

OFFICE OF MEDIA SERVICES, BUREAU OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE

NUMBER 16, FEBRUARY 1970



BASIC DATA ON NORTH VIET-NAM*

Population: 20 million (official 1970 est.)

Capital: Hanoi (pop.: 1 million)

North Viet-Nam, or the "Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam," with a land area of 61,300 square miles (slightly larger than Georgia), is the smallest country on the Southeast Asian peninsula. It is bounded on the north by Communist China, on the west by the Kingdom of Laos, and on the south by the Republic of Viet-Nam. The Gulf of Tonkin lies to the east. About half the land area of North Viet-Nam is covered by forest; about 15 percent is cultivated.

Most of North Viet-Nam is mountainous or hilly, particularly the northern and north-western sections. The rugged highland areas are covered by a thick jungle canopy. The lowlands consist principally of the Red River delta and the coastal plains, which extend northeast and south from the delta. Heavily populated and intensively cultivated, the lowlands are almost entirely covered by rice-fields. Much of the delta region is seasonally flooded; a complex network of dikes and levees throughout this "ricebowl" prevents serious flooding damage.

North Viet-Nam has a monsoonal climate—a hot and humid wet season from mid-May to mid-September (the southwest monsoon), a relatively warm and humid dry season from mid-October to mid-March (the northeast monsoon), and two short transitional seasons. From late December through April the climate of the coastal lowlands and adjacent mountain slopes is dominated by a phenomenon called "crachin," a prolonged period of widespread cloudiness, fog, and drizzle. The seasonal pattern is somewhat different in the southern "panhandle" where the monsoon is shorter and comes later in the year.

North Viet-Nam's flag displays a single yellow star on a red background.

THE PEOPLE

Between 80 and 90 percent of North Viet-Nam's 20 million people are ethnic Vietnamese. The remainder, almost all of whom live in the mountainous areas of the north and west, are members of the Muong, Thai, Meo,



North Vietnamese peasants planting rice in southern province of Quang Binh.

and a number of smaller tribes. The population is concentrated in the Red River delta area where Hanoi, the capital, and Haiphong, the principal port, are located. The Government reports an annual growth rate of 3.5 percent.

Vietnamese is the principal language. The ethnic minority groups speak a variety of tribal languages, while the overseas Chinese, an estimated 200,000 persons living mainly in

*Text based on the Department of State's Background Notes on North Viet-Nam. Background Notes is a series of short, factual pamphlets (more than 150) on the major countries and territories of the world. For further information write to: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

the delta, speak various southern Chinese dialects. Most older educated North Vietnamese can speak French, a legacy of the colonial era. Russian has become the principal technical language as many young North Vietnamese have received training in the Soviet Union. Both Russian and Chinese are taught in the secondary schools. Hanoi claims that more than 95 percent of the population is literate.

The Government administers all educational facilities, and the Lao Dong (Communist) Party maintains a system of political controls which permeates both academic and extra-curricular activities of young people. North Viet-Nam inherited from the French a system which emphasized the liberal arts. Hanoi has changed this emphasis to applied sciences and vocational training. There are about 10,000 "general educational program" (i.e., primary and secondary) schools in North Viet-Nam. Hanoi University is the principal center of higher learning, and there are many technical and scientific schools as well as political training institutions for party and government personnel. In addition, North Viet-Nam in recent years has sent about 25,000 students to the Soviet Union and other Communist countries under various bilateral technical assistance programs.

North Viet-Nam has a long Buddhist tradition, but the practice of religion except in Communist Party-prescribed fashions has been circumscribed. The Government has, however, tolerated Buddhist activities to some extent, particularly among the older generation. Presumably it hopes succeeding generations can be educated to discard the traditions of Buddhism in favor of the precepts of "scientific socialism."

Before 1954 there were more than 1.4 million Roman Catholics in North Viet-Nam. About half fled to the South after the Geneva agreements of 1954 called for temporary division of Viet-Nam, with Communist forces grouped in the North. North Vietnamese leaders view the Roman Catholic Church with great suspicion because it was outspokenly anti-Communist during the preindependence period, and because it is the most cohesive non-Communist group in North Viet-Nam.

GOVERNMENT

North Viet-Nam's Constitution, adopted in 1960, presents the Hanoi government as a representative democracy and claims adherence to such principles as separation of powers, an independent judiciary, universal suffrage, and human rights. It contains a long list of civil liberties which are to be guaranteed if their exercise does not damage the interests of the state.

In reality, legislative and executive authority is combined, and, even in the official governmental structure, the judiciary is subordinated to both other "branches."

The highest legislative organ is the National Assembly, members of which are supposed to be elected every 4 years. The Assembly meets twice yearly and theoretically exercises wide lawmaking and appointive authority. In practice, however, it simply gives formal approval to proposals of executive organs. A permanent Standing Committee is empowered to act for the Assembly when it is not in session. Other legislative bodies, called People's Councils, are elected at province, district, and village levels. As in all Communist-run elections, council candidates are selected by the party. The councils choose administrative committees which handle the day-to-day business on the local level and are ultimately responsible to the Premier of North Viet-Nam and his Council of Ministers. Thus the committee's function is more executive than it is legislative.

The most important centers of power within the North Vietnamese Government are the executive agencies—the President; the Premier; the Council of Ministers (almost all of whom are members of the Lao Dong Party Central Committee); and the administrative committees described above. According to the Constitution, the President is appointed by the National Assembly, and he in turn appoints the Premier and the various ministers. The present Council of Ministers comprises about 30 members, six of whom are also members of the party's highest policymaking body, the Central Committee's Politburo. The key ministries—defense, foreign affairs, and public security (police)—are all headed by Politburo members. The number of non-Communists on the Council has decreased since the first years of the regime as the number of highly trained and competent party members has increased.

As in other Communist countries, the most important political institution in North Viet-Nam is the party, the Dang Lao Dong Viet-Nam (Viet-Nam Worker's Party) or Lao Dong Party. With the exception of Party First Secretary Le Duan, all Politburo members concurrently hold high positions in the Government. This is also the case at the lower levels of government where province, district, and village party officials dominate the administrative councils.

Prior to his death on September 3, 1969, Ho Chi Minh was President of North Viet-Nam and Chairman of the Party Central Committee. The Presidency became largely honorific when Ton Duc Thang replaced Ho. The party is now under the "collective leadership" of the Politburo which is headed by Party First Secretary Le Duan, who has a "first among equals" status. No one has replaced Ho as Chairman of the Central Committee.

HISTORY/POLITICAL CONDITIONS

In 111 B.C. ancestors of the present-day Vietnamese, who inhabited part of what is now southern China and northern North Viet-Nam, were conquered by forces of China's Han dynasty. Chinese rule lasted more than 1,000 years, until 939 A.D., when the Vietnamese ousted their conquerors and began a southward expansion which was to take them all the way to the Gulf of Siam. However, nominal Chinese suzerainty over Viet-Nam continued until the arrival of the French in the mid-19th century.

At the beginning of the 17th century Viet-Nam split into two hostile states, divided at a point just above the present demarcation zone. They were reunited in the 19th century when factional difficulties became less acute.

French Colonization

Throughout the first half of the 19th century, Western (primarily French) traders and missionaries attempted to expand their influence in Indochina (Laos, Cambodia, and Viet-Nam). The Vietnamese rulers of the time were of an isolationist and xenophobic bent and actively resisted these incursions.

Citing what it felt was growing persecution of the country's 300,000 Christians by the Vietnamese rulers, France attacked and in 1858 occupied the port of Tourane, now called Da Nang. Religious and commercial problems continued, and the French extended their control over the Vietnamese. Cochinchina—now the southern third of South Viet-Nam—was made a French colony in 1867. In 1884 Annam and Tonkin—central and northern Viet-Nam—became French protectorates after France defeated Vietnamese and Chinese forces in Tonkin. French control over Viet-Nam was greatly circumscribed during the Japanese occupation which began in 1940, and in March 1945 Japan took complete control.

Throughout the French colonial period, but especially after 1920, nationalist and revolutionary groups operated openly and clandestinely in Viet-Nam. By far the best organized and most disciplined of these groups was the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League and its successor, the Indochinese Communist Party.

Origins of Vietnamese Communism

The Vietnamese Communist movement began in Paris in 1920, when a man called Nguyen Van Thanh, one of the first of at least a dozen pseudonyms used by Ho Chi Minh, became a charter member of the French Communist Party. In 1922 Ho Chi Minh went to Moscow to study Marxist doctrine and later to Canton to serve the Chinese revolutionary government. While in China he formed the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League, setting the stage

for the formation of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930. Official North Vietnamese sources say the party was founded on instructions from the Moscow-based Communist International (Comintern).

French authorities jailed much of the party leadership in 1930, after its abortive attempts to establish "soviets" (agricultural communes) in Nghe An Province. Ho Chi Minh was abroad at that time but was imprisoned later in Hong Kong by the British. He was released in 1933, and in 1936 a new French government released his compatriots who, at the outset of World War II, fled to China. There they were joined by Ho, who formed the Viet Minh, which was purportedly a coalition of all anti-French Vietnamese groups. Official North Vietnamese publications state that the Viet Minh was founded and led by the Indochinese Communist Party.

World War II Years

Although some Vietnamese nationalists joined the Viet Minh, the more influential ones remained aloof. Like Ho Chi Minh and his colleagues, they had fled to the Chinese border province of Kwangsi. In October 1942 Chinese Kuomintang generals invited all major non-Communist factions of Vietnamese nationalism to a conference in Kwangsi to form a "government-in-exile." The organization which emerged from this conference, known as the Viet-Nam Cach Menh Dong Minh Hoi (Viet-Nam Revolutionary League) or Dong Minh Hoi, was fragmented, poorly led, and generally ineffectual in comparison with the Viet Minh which had good leadership, a tight organization, and an established network of party agents and bases in Viet-Nam.

The Dong Minh Hoi's Kuomintang mentors decided, therefore, to seek union of the two organizations. In early 1943, to effect the rapprochement, Ho Chi Minh, who had been imprisoned by the Chinese a year before, was released. Nominally merged with the Dong Minh Hoi, the Viet Minh played a largely independent role, strengthening its military and political organization in Viet Nam. Its non-Communist partners merely awaited the day when the Kuomintang would carry them to power.

The Viet Minh, then, with the only effective Vietnamese military force, was able to fill the vacuum created by the Japanese coup de force of March 9, 1945, which virtually eliminated French authority in northern Viet-Nam. On August 16, the day after "V-J Day," Ho Chi Minh severed ties with the "Viet-Nam Provisional Republican Government" formed at a Dong Minh Hoi congress in March 1944, and established the "Viet-Nam National Liberation Committee." At the same time, Viet Minh guerrillas were transformed into the "Liberation Army." When Ho Chi Minh and his Viet Minh units entered Hanoi, they were greeted with an outpouring of support from enthusiastic

masses who did not know (and might well have been little concerned) that their liberators were Communist-led. Considerable time elapsed before Ho Chi Minh publicly acknowledged that he was "Nguyen Ai Quoc," the founder of the Indochinese Communist Party.

The "Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam"

On August 29, 1945, Ho Chi Minh formed his first government, mainly from members of the National Liberation Committee. Of the 14 Committee members, 11 belonged to the party or had some connection with the Viet Minh. Ho kept the Presidency and the foreign ministry for himself and awarded to party or Viet Minh members the posts of interior (police), national defense, finance, propaganda, health, and labor. The ministries of youth, justice, and education were given to members of the Democratic Party—a Viet Minh affiliate since its founding in 1944—and nonparty men received the posts of national economy, social welfare, and public works. On September 2, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and presented his new government to a mass rally in Hanoi.

It had been decided at the Potsdam conference of July 1945 that the Chinese would accept the surrender of Japanese forces above the 16th parallel, and that the British would accept the surrender to the south of the line. The Chinese moved into the North in September 1945, bringing with them the nationalists of the Dong Minh Hoi and the Viet-Nam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD), or Viet-Nam Nationalist Party. In the meantime, Ho Chi Minh's regime was consolidating its position not only by political indoctrination, the extension of police controls, and the liquidation of opponents, but also through an impressive mobilization of labor to repair the dike system, restore agricultural production, and otherwise cope with widespread famine and economic breakdown.

To ensure the cooperation of the Dong Minh Hoi and the VNQDD in the elections for the first National Assembly, Ho Chi Minh promised them two ministries and the vice presidency. As newcomers unable to campaign effectively in the time that remained before the elections, the nationalist parties were also promised 70 of the 380 Assembly seats regardless of actual election results. The Viet Minh ran its component parts (Democratic Party, Socialists, and Marxists) separately and received the overwhelming majority of the votes. In reality, the coalition existed only in Hanoi, and only on the surface there. In the countryside little had changed. Communist and non-Communist groups maintained their respective strongholds and attacked each others' cadres, kidnaping and assassinating.

The non-Communist nationalists were doomed by the Franco-Chinese treaty of February 1946 which provided for withdrawal of Chinese forces and entry of French troops. Both



The late Ho Chi Minh.

the VNQDD and the Dong Minh Hoi felt they could preserve their militantly anti-French image only by demonstrating open hostility toward French forces. Their violent tactics eventually led to combined French-Viet Minh operations against nationalist strongholds, which, without Chinese protection and support, collapsed and were taken over by the Viet Minh. These operations, plus police action against individual "noncooperative" nationalists, virtually destroyed the effective power of the nationalist parties. The Viet Minh's rivals, although dubbed "reactionaries" by the Communists, had been far more militantly anti-colonial during this period than the Viet Minh, which had openly allied itself with the "colonialists" (the French) to crush the nationalists.

In May 1946 the party formed a larger front around the Viet Minh which had by this time become known for its Communist association. The Lien Viet, or "Popular National Front," encompassed all organizations and parties—even elements of the VNQDD and Dong Minh Hoi. [The Viet Minh officially disappeared in 1951 when, strengthened by direct contact with the victorious Communist Chinese forces, the party decided to come back in the open—this time under the name of Dang Lao Dong Viet-Nam (Viet-Nam Workers' Party). In September 1955 the Lien Viet was replaced by the Viet-Nam Fatherland Front, which still exists in North Viet-Nam.]

The National Assembly met on October 28, 1946, and elected a new government which was

more openly Communist than the preceding one but still contained some non-Communist elements. The Assembly also passed a new "democratic" constitution (which was never promulgated); elected a Communist-controlled Permanent Committee; and gave the Permanent Committee power to vote government bills, convoke parliament, control the Government, and decide war and peace. The Assembly did not meet again until December 1953, although it was never formally dissolved.

By the end of 1946 non-Communist nationalist elements had been neutralized or destroyed in the North and severely weakened in the rest of the country. Of the 70 VNQDD and Dong Minh Hoi Assembly deputies, only 20 remained at the close of the Assembly on November 9. All but two of these had voted with the Viet Minh during the session; one of the two "noncooperators" was arrested, the other went into hiding.

When open and large-scale hostilities broke out with the French in December 1946, Ho Chi Minh and his party were firmly in control of the Vietnamese independence movement in the North and in some other parts of Viet-Nam.

The Indochina War

The Communist Party under Ho Chi Minh was officially disbanded from 1945-51, although party business continued under the name "Association for Marxist Studies." A Hanoi publication later reported: "From 1945 to 1954, it [the party] organized and led the war of resistance to defend the people's power and defeat the French colonialists."

In a March 1946 accord France recognized the "Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam" as a free state within the French Union and agreed to withdraw its troops gradually from Viet-Nam. Dissension continued and increased, however, and on November 26 fighting broke out in Haiphong. On the following day the French bombarded Haiphong's Vietnamese

quarter, and on December 19 the Vietnamese attacked French positions in Hanoi and were driven out after bitter fighting.

The organized non-Communist opposition having been virtually eliminated, most nationalists joined the Viet Minh resistance against the French. Initially the resistance used weapons left over from World War II, but after the fall of mainland China to the Communists in 1949, the Viet Minh was able to obtain significant amounts of war materiel from Communist China and the U.S.S.R.

The war in Viet-Nam reached an eventual stalemate, with the French controlling the major population centers and a few isolated outposts in the hinterlands, while the Viet Minh occupied most of the countryside in the North as well as many rural areas in the South. The most significant battle of the war occurred at a small French-held position in the far northwest called Dien Bien Phu. On May 7, 1954, Viet Minh forces overran this outpost, inflicting heavy casualties on the French defenders. This was the turning-point for the French people, and pressure to end the Indochina war increased.

The Geneva Conference of 1954

The Geneva conference to set the peace terms opened on May 8, 1954. The U.S.S.R. and the U.K. served as cochairmen. Seven other delegations participated: France, the United States, Communist China, Cambodia, Laos, the Viet Minh, and the State of Viet-Nam (the non-Communist government at Saigon, led by Bao Dai and supported by the U.S. and its allies).

The July 1954 Geneva Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam called for a cease-fire; provisional partition of Viet-Nam at the 17th parallel, with regroupment of the Communist forces and their sympathizers to the north and regroupment of French and non-



During the past two decades Hanoi has obtained large amounts of war materiel from Communist China. Here South Vietnamese and U.S. salvage crews board steel-hulled trawler run aground south of Saigon in 1966 while attempting to infiltrate guns and supplies to the Viet Cong. Some 250 tons of weapons and ammunition, many with Chinese markings, were recovered.

Communist forces to the south; a demilitarized zone 3 miles wide on either side of the 17th parallel; and a prohibition against foreign military bases in Viet-Nam, importation of war materiel, and inclusion of either zone of Viet-Nam in military pacts. Each zone was forbidden to interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Separate agreements covered Laos and Cambodia. An International Control Commission (ICC), composed of representatives of Canada, India, and Poland, was established in each country to oversee implementation of the agreements.

The Geneva conference issued its final declaration on July 21. The declaration, which bore no signatures, reaffirmed the principles of the agreements and called for the establishment of "democratic institutions" in Viet-Nam through "free general elections." General elections were to be held in July 1956. In the interim, neither side was to take reprisal against partisans of the other. People in one zone who wished to settle in the other zone were to be allowed to do so.

The U.S. representative did not fully endorse the Geneva agreements, but President Eisenhower pledged that the United States would not use force or the threat of force to disturb the arrangements. The State of Viet-Nam objected to partition of Viet-Nam and stated its unwillingness to be bound by any agreement among the other parties concerning the political future of its people.

From the Geneva conference the Vietnamese Communists gained unchallenged control over nearly half the country and a majority of the population. Thus they were certain to win any countrywide elections, giving them a good chance to control all Viet-Nam. Control could have come about sooner if the fledgling government in the South had fallen before the elections.

The Saigon government under Ngo Dinh Diem, however, was able to disarm the private factional armies in the South and unify the non-Communist majority. Standing on the position stated by the State of Viet-Nam's representative at Geneva, Diem refused to discuss elections with the Hanoi government on the ground that truly free and democratic elections in the North would be impossible under the Communist regime.

The Postwar Exodus

Article 14 of the Geneva Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam provided for a period of 300 days during which freedom of movement would be allowed all persons wishing to move from one zone of Viet-Nam to the other. By early 1955 nearly 900,000 North Vietnamese had sought refuge in South Viet-Nam, despite a combination of administrative regulations and extra-legal control techniques by the Communists to end the migration. For example, to leave one's village, a special pass

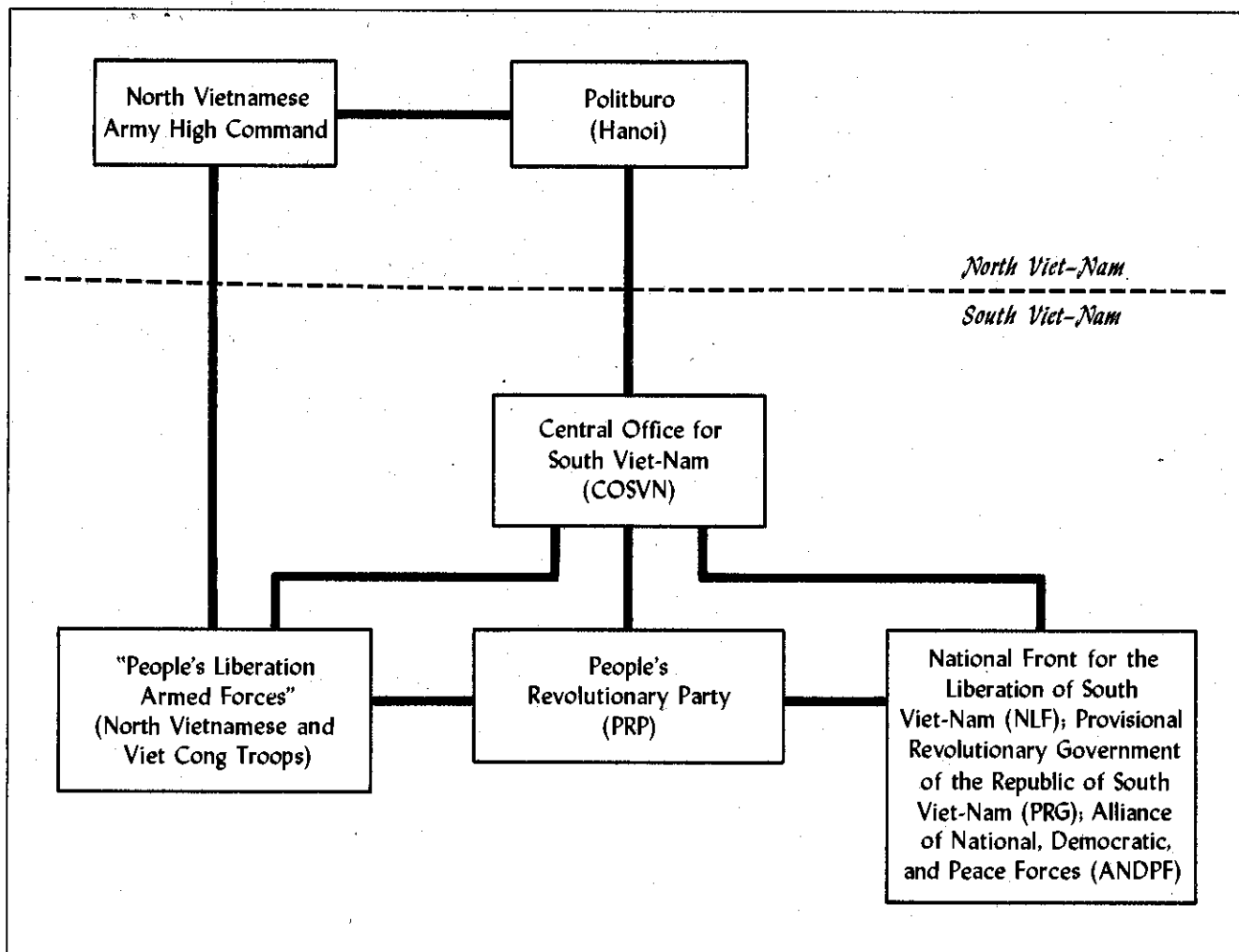


October 1954—refugees at North Viet-Nam's port of Haiphong prepare to embark to South Viet-Nam during free-movement period set by Geneva agreements. Turbaned men, foreground, are North African members of French Army.

was required. Police checkpoints along the roads ensured that only authorized travel took place. There was only one train per day from Hanoi to the Haiphong evacuation point (for sea travel to the South), and husbands and wives were not permitted to travel together. The International Control Commission compound in Hanoi was guarded by Communist troops who blocked entry to anyone who wished to air a complaint or request help. Villagers were forbidden to speak with ICC field representatives, and all of the representatives' queries were referred to party cadres who had been primed to give "correct" answers.

"Reform" Measures

As in most Communist countries, "Agricultural Reform" in North Viet-Nam was designed to deal more with political problems facing the regime than with economic and social inequities. The Vietnamese Communists began preparing for land reform in 1951, with an agriculture tax designed to tax landowners out of existence; when this failed to break Vietnamese landholding traditions, the Communists launched a "Political Struggle" under the motto "give the masses a free hand to fight the reactionaries." This reign of terror spared no class or group; even party members fell victim to it. According to Hoang Van Chi (see Reading List), "The death-roll during the days of terror averaged between three to five in every village...." An immediate result of the Political Struggle was greatly increased willingness to "volunteer" for "citizen labor" and to pay taxes promptly. Also, a substantial part of the population was implicated in the executions, thereby removing the sole onus from the party and government. The main effect, however, was to condition the rural population for the next step, the "Land Reform."



BASIC COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION IN SOUTH VIET-NAM

The Land Reform was carried out in two stages, the first being the Land Rent Reduction Campaign (1954) and the second the Land Reform proper (1955-56) during which land was distributed to "the toilers." Distribution, however, was but a transitory step leading to "cooperativization" and finally "collectivization." In implementing the Land Reform, the party followed the methods of the Chinese Communists. Its "free hand to the masses" doctrine meant that persons were accused, denounced, and punished with little concern on the part of the leadership about excesses.

Statistics on victims of the reform program (1951-56) were never publicized, but the figure probably lies between 100,000 and 200,000, including the considerable number who committed suicide to avoid mass trials or who starved to death. When the Geneva agreements went into effect in 1954, many potential victims sought to escape these measures by going South. This caused Hanoi to ease the campaign until the 300-day period for free movement expired.

The purge of the countryside was resumed in late 1955 and reached a peak in early 1956. By late summer, however, the de-Stalinization campaign in Russia and the famous "Hundred Flowers" speech in China had had a liberalizing influence in North Viet-Nam. Moreover, the essentially political goals of the land reform campaign (i.e., the elimination of political opposition to the regime by equating "landlords" with "reactionaries" in rural areas) had been largely achieved. A "Rectification of Errors" campaign was begun in the fall of 1956, therefore, to halt the excesses.

As in Hungary and Poland, the period of liberalization resulted in open revolt in North Viet-Nam, principally in the Quynh Luu district of Ho Chi Minh's native province, Nghe An. A thousand peasants were reported killed or wounded and several thousand more arrested and deported when the uprising was suppressed by the "Viet-Nam People's Army." By early 1957 the short-lived period of liberalization was over.

The Purge of Intellectuals

The relative harmony between intellectuals and the Viet Minh regime began to break down shortly after Mao Tse-tung took over leadership of China in 1949. This new Communist power provided the Viet Minh with increased supplies of military materiel as well as ideological support, including treatises on the control of intellectuals. When the Viet Minh began to apply some of these Chinese precepts, many intellectuals returned to French-controlled areas.

The "Land Reform" campaign affected intellectuals unfavorably since most of them were sons and daughters of landowners. They could escape serious punishment, however, by earning the status of "Progressive Personalities." This class consisted of "individuals of the landlord class who participated positively in the resistance war against the imperialist interventionists, against the traitorous Vietnamese puppets, and who have enthusiastically supported the popular democratic authorities" "Progressive Personalities" were obliged to "voluntarily present all the land they possessed to the people." They were also required to undergo "reeducation" in order to rid themselves of "feudalistic tendencies." Reeducation courses produced "confessions" by the most prominent men and women in North Vietnamese letters, repudiating their previous artistic endeavors as "inspirations of Vietnamese traitors" and "products of a decadent culture."

In the wake of a general liberalization trend in Communist countries, North Vietnamese party leaders in September 1956 stated that "a number of grave errors had been committed during the execution of the land reforms" and that the party would correct these errors by, among other things, "extending democracy, safeguarding democratic liberties,

and enlarging the system of democratic legality." The regime further announced that it would give "different tendencies the freedom to discuss and argue."

This freedom lasted only 3 months, but the momentum built up during the movement resulted in public demonstrations and the large-scale peasant revolt described above. Tightened controls ended the period of liberalization, but repercussions continued. A Politburo resolution of January 6, 1958, charged that the "liberals" were saboteurs: "It is clear that the anti-socialist and anti-Party elements have profited from our laxness to continue their attacks on us in the sphere of ideas and under the guise of arts and letters. The activities of these saboteurs among the artists and writers constitute a most dangerous threat and must be dealt with urgently." For most intellectuals, this meant another round of political reeducation and self-criticism.

Hanoi, COSVN, and the NLF

By 1959 Hanoi turned to open warfare when it realized it would not be able to subdue the South with the relatively low-level military and subversive tactics it had used since 1954. The Third Party Congress held in Hanoi in September 1960 called for the formation of a "broad national united front" in South Viet-Nam. In December 1960 Hanoi radio announced the formation of the National Front for the Liberation of South Viet-Nam (NLF)—a "coalition of all patriotic forces opposed to the reactionary and traitorous Diem clique." In October 1961 Hanoi reactivated its central Office for South Viet-Nam (COSVN), the clandestine headquarters of the party in the South.

Hanoi directs most of its military, political, and propaganda efforts in South Viet-Nam through COSVN. (Communist military units in the northern half of South Viet-Nam are controlled directly by Hanoi.) Shortly after COSVN was reactivated the party surfaced in the South as the People's Revolutionary Party. The PRP is simply the southern branch of the Lao Dong Party, but Hanoi uses the name People's Revolutionary Party rather than Lao Dong to reinforce the impression that the "revolution" in South Viet-Nam is strictly indigenous.

Publicly, the PRP "Central Committee" is the leading party organ in the South, but the covert COSVN is actually the highest authority. Captured documents reveal that COSVN and the PRP Central Committee essentially are staffed by the same people. Moreover, the members of the Standing (or Current Affairs) Committee which runs COSVN are also members of the Lao Dong Central Committee based in Hanoi.

Overall leadership for the war in the South is provided by the Politburo of the Lao Dong Central Committee in Hanoi. The Lao Dong Politburo not only gives broad policy direction to COSVN, but also sends COSVN specific directives on important issues.



Viet Cong plan attack.



In typical guerrilla-warfare tactic, Viet Cong employ villagers to sharpen bamboo stakes for trail traps in South Viet-Nam.

COSVN does, however, have wide powers in running day-to-day operations in the South. This is possible, within the party's principle of the higher echelon always directing the lower, because in recent years COSVN has been strengthened with executive cadres (Lao Dong Central Committee members) from the North. Evidence indicates that Pham Hung, fourth-ranking member of the Lao Dong Politburo and First Vice Premier in the Hanoi government, is the present chief of COSVN.

The Politburo also directs the foreign activities of front groups in the South. It appoints the members of various "friendship" delegations as well as the staffs of permanent missions abroad. At least four of the five principal NLF (Viet Cong) negotiators at the Paris talks on Viet-Nam are members of the Lao Dong Party. The Politburo controls the substantive positions taken by the NLF delegation (now called the "Provisional Revolutionary Government" delegation) at the talks.

In addition to mobilizing the population, the National Liberation Front has become Hanoi's public spokesman in South Viet-Nam. After the 1968 Tet offensive the NLF began to portray itself as a "governmental" entity, claiming that it controlled and administered vast segments of South Viet-Nam. It used its presence at the Paris talks to back its claim as the "sovereign agent of the South Vietnamese people" in foreign affairs. The transition from front to government was completed on June 10, 1969, when the NLF joined forces with another Communist front (the Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces, ANDPF, established in 1968) to form the "Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet-Nam" (the PRG). In a radio broadcast the next day, the NLF stated it had "transferred" its "authority" in domestic and

foreign affairs to the PRG. According to the broadcast, the NLF would retain its role as the "leader of the liberation struggle."

Exactly how the PRG will fit into the Communist superstructure is not yet known. Evidence suggests that the PRG, like the NLF, will function mainly as public cover for activities conceived by Hanoi and executed through the various functional committees of COSVN (e.g., Military Affairs Committee, Front Committee, Finance and Economy Section, Propaganda and Training Section, etc.).

Intensification of the War

In 1964 Hanoi shifted from infiltrating small units to sending entire regular regiments into South Viet-Nam. This infiltration, across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) and via the "Ho Chi Minh Trail" complex in Laos, continues to the present; it is estimated that nearly 600,000 soldiers and political cadre have been infiltrated into the South thus far.

In August 1964, in retaliation for North Vietnamese attacks on two U.S. destroyers on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin, the United States bombed selected naval facilities in North Viet-Nam. In February 1965, facing the invasion of the South by North Vietnamese divisions, President Johnson ordered the bombing of supply routes and other military targets in North Viet-Nam and an extensive buildup in U.S. forces.

To promote negotiations leading to settlement of the war, President Johnson on March 31, 1968, ordered a halt in U.S. bombing above the 19th parallel, thus in effect exempting most of North Viet-Nam from attack. U.S. and North Vietnamese negotiators met at Paris May 15 to discuss terms for a complete bombing halt

and to arrange for a conference of all "interested parties" in the Viet-Nam war, including the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam and the National Liberation Front. President Johnson ordered all bombing stopped effective November 1, 1968, and the four delegations met for their first plenary session on January 17, 1969.

The Paris Meetings

The only official U.S. contact with representatives of North Viet-Nam is at the Paris meetings. Hanoi and its southern agents (the Viet Cong) have from the outset demanded that the United States and its allies withdraw their forces from South Viet-Nam unconditionally, and that the United States "get rid of" the elected, legal government of South Viet-Nam. The Saigon government and the United States have proposed mutual withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces and free elections—in which all parties, including Communist, can participate—under international supervision to determine South Viet-Nam's political future. To date, all U.S. efforts to get serious negotiations underway at Paris have failed.

ECONOMY

Although only about 15 percent of its land area is arable, 75 percent of North Viet-Nam's labor force is employed in agriculture; industry employs less than 10 percent. The gross national product is about \$1.6 billion; GNP per capita is about \$90.

Industrial development proceeded at a fairly rapid pace until 1964; then it slowed down considerably, due largely to Hanoi's commitment of manpower and materiel to the war in the South. The U.S. bombing campaign also contributed substantially to the halt in economic development by forcing the regime to devote

human and material resources to air defense and repair of bomb-damaged defense installations, communications facilities, and supply networks. Economic reconstruction has proceeded slowly since the bombing halt.

Food processing is North Viet-Nam's most important industry in terms of value of output. Rice, sugar, fish, and tea are the principal processed foods. Most North Vietnamese industry is in an embryonic stage of development. However, there is a large textile plant at Nam Dinh and a steel complex at Thai Nguyen, both of which were severely bombed.

North Viet-Nam's principal mineral resources, in order of importance, are coal, iron, apatite, and chromite. The major industrial crop is timber.

Agriculture is concentrated in the heavily populated Red River delta, where an elaborate system of dikes, dams, and reservoirs allows extensive irrigation during dry periods and prevents devastating floods during the rainy season. Much of the land is double-cropped. Rice is the principal crop; corn, sweet potatoes, and manioc are also grown. Despite government efforts to promote "technological revolution," North Vietnamese agriculture is largely unmechanized. Draft power is still provided by oxen and water buffalo, and irrigation is accomplished mainly with manual pumps.

North Viet-Nam has historically been a rice-deficit area. During the French colonial period the rice-rich Mekong delta in the South made up much of the food shortage in the North, but with the partition of Viet-Nam in 1954 rice inputs from this source stopped. The Hanoi government has made strong but thus far unsuccessful efforts to attain self-sufficiency in food grain production.

In recent years, because of inherent inefficiencies, bad weather, natural disasters, and increased attention on the part of the administration to the war in the South, rice shortages



Combining traditional Tet (Lunar New Year) observance with anti-American propaganda, this poster—on display in Haiphong, North Viet-Nam's second largest city—shows rooster attacking soldier labeled "US". 1969 was the Year of the Rooster, according to traditional Vietnamese/Chinese calendar.

have reached critical proportions. At one point in 1968 the monthly "rice ration" of an average North Vietnamese was composed of only 30 percent rice, the remainder being wheat products, corn, and manioc. North Viet-Nam was forced to rely on massive imports of wheat and other food grains from the Soviet Union and China in order to maintain even bare subsistence levels.

Most of the farmers are organized into "voluntary" cooperatives whose affairs are managed by local party chapters. The Government claims that more than 90 percent of all farmers and 95 percent of the arable land belong to cooperatives. The planning function is monopolized by the central government.

North Viet-Nam has never enjoyed a foreign trade surplus. Deficits have been financed through aid from Communist countries, with whom North Viet-Nam conducts nearly all its trade. Recently, North Viet-Nam has been trying to expand its trade contacts with Western nations, especially the Scandinavian countries, and Japan. Its principal exports are coal, wood products, apatite, and handicrafts; its imports run the gamut from petroleum products, vehicles, and industrial equipment to food and raw textiles. The Government has not published trade statistics since 1963.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

North Viet-Nam maintains diplomatic relations with all Communist states in Europe and Asia; with a number of "third-world" nations in Asia, Africa, and the Near East; and is expanding its diplomatic contacts with non-Communist nations in Western Europe. In January 1969 Sweden recognized North Viet-Nam, and later that year Hanoi sent an economic delegation to the Scandinavian countries to discuss its postwar development.

In recent years the North Vietnamese have remained neutral in the Sino-Soviet schism. Hanoi relies on good relations with both the U.S.S.R. and Communist China to ensure itself adequate and timely supplies of war materiel and economic assistance.

North Viet-Nam's relations with Laos and Cambodia have become increasingly strained because of Hanoi's militant support of Communist insurgents, especially in Laos. Hanoi has never admitted the presence of the more than 50,000 North Vietnamese troops in Laos, but these troops bear the brunt of the fighting on the Communist side. North Viet-Nam also shuffles large contingents of troops in and out of Cambodia between Communist offensives in South Viet-Nam. Cambodian media have re-

cently complained that Hanoi is supporting the Khmer Rouge (Communist) insurgency which is aimed at toppling the government of Prince Sihanouk.

NORTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

* member of Lao Dong Party Central Committee

** member of Politburo

President—Ton Duc Thang*

Vice President—Nguyen Luong Bang*

Chairman, National Assembly Standing Committee—Truong Chinh**

Premier—Pham Van Dong**

First Deputy Premier—Pham Hung**

Deputy Premier and Minister of Defense—Vo Nguyen Giap**

Deputy Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs—Nguyen Duy Trinh**

POLITBURO OF THE LAO DONG PARTY

(listed in rank order used by Hanoi media)

Le Duan (First Secretary of the Party)

Truong Chinh

Pham Van Dong

Pham Hung

Vo Nguyen Giap

Le Duc Tho

Nguyen Duy Trinh

Le Thanh Nghi

Hoang Van Hoan

(Alternate members: Tran Quoc Hoan and Van Tien Dung)

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE PUBLICATION 8514

East Asian and Pacific Series 186

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1970 O - 377-420

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402 - Price 15 cents